

FASCINATING STORIES OF FORGOTTEN LIVES

STUDY TWELVE

Naaman: The Officer Whose Leprosy Was Cleansed

2 Kings 5:1–14

“My ways are not your ways,” The Lord is saying. “My ways are higher than your ways. I am working when you don’t even know how or where I am working. You don’t even know who I am working through.”

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll



To deepen your study, scan to listen.

THE adage “God works in mysterious ways” proves true. Finite humans cannot fully understand the purposes and ways of an infinite God. He simply cannot be confined by our expectations nor controlled by what we deem reasonable.

As the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah:

*“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD.
“And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.
For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so my ways are higher than your ways
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8–9)*

God sets His own rules. His ways are higher than ours, and they often include surprises—turns of events or changes of direction that startle us. Because we think we have Him figured out, we can feel disappointed, confused, even angry when things don’t go as we expected. At these times, remember that God’s “ways are far beyond anything you could imagine” (55:8). Our response is to submit to God’s will and embrace His plan, even when you can’t understand it.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study we will marvel at God’s ways in an intriguing account from the book of 2 Kings. An Aramean army commander named Naaman learned about God’s surprising, higher ways when he desperately sought healing. Only when Naaman released his expectations about how God should work and yielded his will to God’s will were his hopes realized.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before Naaman could enjoy God's banquet of blessing, he first needed to dine on a slice of humble pie! And then he needed to set aside his agenda and seek God's ways before his own. Likewise, in humility, as you open God's Word:

*Seek the LORD while you can find him,
Call on him now while he is near.* (Isaiah 55:6)

Write your own prayer, asking the Lord for a sensitive heart to embrace His ways.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Naaman's story took place during the divided kingdom. David's century-long united monarchy unraveled when King Solomon drifted spiritually and ripped apart under Rehoboam, Solomon's foolish son. Ten tribes in the north split from Judah and Benjamin. These northern tribes kept the name Israel, while the southern tribes took the name Judah.

On this torn page of history, Israel was also involved in a lingering war with Aram, also called Syria. All of Israel's kings were spiritually corrupt, so God directed the nation primarily through His prophets, who declared God's messages with precision and clarity. In those days, Elisha was God's man in Israel.

Into this scene of conflict and corruption stepped Naaman, not a Jew but a Syrian, serving under the direction of the Syrian king, Ben-hadad.



Observation: Naaman's Healing . . . God's Way

In narratives, like the passage we're studying, carefully observe the themes that weave through the story. Notice how the characters interact and grow in their faith, and pay attention to the spiritual lessons they model.¹

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Naaman's Plight and God's Preparation—2 Kings 5:1–3

Who was Naaman and what had he accomplished, according to *2 Kings 5:1*? The verse hinges on the conjunction, “but,” which sets the tone for the passage. Despite his accolades, what was Naaman's affliction? How would this affliction disrupt his career, his relationships, his family, and his social status?

Through Aram's prior raids into Israel, God was setting the stage for Naaman's healing. According to *5:2–3*, how was God at work?

Naaman never imagined that his hope would come from a young Jewish slave girl. But then, he didn't know that God's ways are not our ways! Naaman makes several mistakes as he steps nervously into God's plan.

Naaman's First Mistaken Way—2 Kings 5:4–5

According to *2 Kings 5:4–5*, what did Naaman do after hearing about the prophet in Samaria? What did Naaman mistakenly assume he would need to be healed?

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Naaman's Second Mistaken Way—2 Kings 5:6–8

The king of Aram sent Naaman to see Joram, the king of Israel. What did Naaman wrongly suppose, according to [2 Kings 5:6–8](#)? What suspicion did that arouse in Israel's paranoid king?

Naaman's Third Mistaken Way—2 Kings 5:9–12

In his homeland, Naaman was admired and respected. Soldiers snapped to attention when he walked by. Citizens showered him with honor and treated him as a hero. When he arrived at the home of the prophet Elisha, what did he expect, according to [2 Kings 5:9–12](#)? What did he receive? How did he react? What prejudices did he reveal?

Naaman Relents—2 Kings 5:13–14

The most unlikely people instructed Naaman—the slave girl, the messenger at the door, and now Naaman's own officers. What did they say, and how did Naaman receive their counsel, according to [2 Kings 5:13–14](#)? What resulted?

Naaman learned that surrendering to God's way is the most basic lesson of faith. Finally, he set aside his pride and obeyed. When he emerged from the water healed, the servants cheered with delight! This proud soldier had come to the Lord with a childlike faith, so the Lord had given him a childlike flesh—new skin to match his new heart.

That is an incredible miracle. Water! What if we could bottle that kind of power and dispense it? But it isn't bottled water. It isn't the place. It isn't the details. It's the Lord! It's the working of God in the life of a diseased man.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Links in the Chain

Over the years, Naaman had bare-knuckled his way to success, achieving whatever he wanted through grit and willpower. God, however, operates on a system of grace. Paying for services, knowing important people, or prideful self-confidence won't get you anywhere with God.

How do you see Naaman's mistaken attempts to "earn" healing mirrored in the lives of people today seeking to "earn" eternal life or to "earn" spiritual healing?

The slave girl, Elisha's messenger, and the officers served as "links in a chain" to lead Naaman to God. What role did each link fulfill in Naaman's healing?

If the human "links" who pointed Naaman to God had failed to speak up or if Naaman had resisted God's messengers and refused to humble himself, he would not have been healed. How does God use us in others' lives to draw people to Himself to receive His grace? What principle can you draw about how God's Spirit leads others through us?

Don't take lightly the individuals whom God brings across your path. These are all fingers on the hands of God, moving and changing lives.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: God's Ways Are Higher Than Our Ways

The Scriptures resound with the truth that God's ways are higher than our ways. Read the following four verses about God's thoughts, God's ways, and God's works. Then, in your own words, complete the sentence for each verse, noting its nuance and how it complements the other Scriptures cited.

Psalm 92:5: God's works are _____

Romans 11:33: God's ways are _____

1 Corinthians 2:16: God's thoughts are _____

Ephesians 3:20: God's power is _____

Reflecting on these four verses, how do they further underscore the clash of Naaman's expectation for his own healing versus God's prescription for Naaman's healing?

*Salvation is not cut to your pattern. Leprosy is not cured on your prescription.
You've got to obey God's way. But the beauty of it all is that God is at work!*
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Lessons Learned from Naaman's Example

For those who seek to live in concert with God's higher and sometimes mysterious ways, four lessons emerge from the account of Naaman's healing.

First, *it is not until we accept the fact that we are diseased that we seek cleansing*. Christ didn't come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Second, *it is not until we hear the truth that we discover the way to find relief*. In Naaman's case, each person God brought across his path led him closer to his healing. They served as links in the chain.

Third, *it is not until we come to the end of ourselves that we are ready to go God's way*. It's simple, it's humbling, and sometimes it may even seem illogical. It doesn't fit our scheme. It must be done God's way.

Fourth, *it is not until we do exactly as God requires that cleansing occurs*. Naaman finally had to get in the Jordan River. Nothing more, nothing less.

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Are you seeking healing, blessing, or direction from the Lord? If so, are you willing to receive it His way, even if His way demands your humility or seems illogical? What might that require of you?

Has God brought across your path lately someone who might be a link in the chain for you to receive God's leading for your life? Who is that person and how is God using him or her?

If you desire to know God and have His peace, forgiveness, and hope, then you must follow His path. The path may not be what you expect, and it's nothing you can carve out in your own strength. It is His way—nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. Like Naaman, all you must do is surrender your pride and come.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I thank You for the truth of this great Old Testament story. I'm grateful that it's still true, that my ways are not Your ways, that Your ways are higher than mine and better than mine. I have wasted far too many days, perhaps even years, striving in my own strength. I've come to realize that it's simple faith in Jesus Christ that does the job. Calm my spirit and use my life to reach others who are searching but going about it the wrong way. In the name of Jesus Christ, I trust You and I thank You. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1990, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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